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PATENT APPLICATION

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE
BEFORE THE BOARD OF PATENT APPEALS AND INTERFERENCES

In re application of
Shinichi KUDO

Docket No: Q59040

Appln. No.: 09/559,469

Group Art Unit: 3713

Confirmation No.: 1492

Examiner: NGUYEN, B.

Filed: April 26, 2000

For: METHOD OF SWITCHING BACKGROUND IMAGES IN ACCORDANCE WITH MOVEMENT OF CHARACTERS, STORAGE MEDIUM FOR STORING PROGRAMS, AND VIDEO GAME DEVICE

SUBMISSION OF APPELLANT'S BRIEF ON APPEAL

Assistant Commissioner for Patents
Washington, D.C. 20231

Sir:

Submitted herewith please find an original and two copies of Appellant's Brief on Appeal. Authorization is also given to charge or credit any difference or overpayment to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. A duplicate copy of this paper is attached.

Respectfully submitted,

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APPELLANTS' BRIEF ON APPEAL UNDER 37 C.F.R. § 1.192

Assistant Commissioner for Patents
Washington, D.C. 20231

Sir:

In accordance with the provisions of 37 C.F.R. § 1.192, Appellants submit the following:

I. REAL PARTY IN INTEREST

Based on information supplied by Appellant, and to the best of Appellants' legal representatives' knowledge, the real party in interest is the assignee, Konami Co. Ltd.

II. RELATED APPEALS AND INTERFERENCES

Appellants, as well as Appellant's assigns and legal representatives are unaware of any appeals or interferences which will be directly affected by, or which will directly affect, or have a bearing on the Board's decision in the pending appeal.

III. STATUS OF CLAIMS

Claims 1-11 are currently pending. The Examiner finally rejected all of claims 1-11 in the Office Action dated November 4, 2002. The Examiner confirmed the final rejection of claims 1-11 in an Advisory Action dated March 31, 2003. However, the rejection of claims 10 and 11 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, first paragraph, was withdrawn. Thus, this appeal only concerns the rejection of claims 1-11 as unpatentable under 35 U.S.C. § 103. The claims 1-11, as finally rejected, are set forth in the attached Appendix.

IV. STATUS OF AMENDMENTS

Claims 1-11 as presented on appeal have been pending in the application since an amendment filed on August 19, 2002, which was entered and added new claims 10 and 11. Claims 1, 4 and 7-9 were amended in a communication filed on January 28, 2002, which was entered. A request for reconsideration filed on February 4, 2003 in response to the final Office Action mailed on November 4, 2002 did not amend any of then pending claims 1-11.

As to whether this request for reconsideration filed on February 4, 2003 was entered, Appellant notes that an Advisory Action mailed March 31, 2003 appears to have entered the communication, since it indicated that a rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 112 had been overcome. The Advisory Action did not expressly state or otherwise indicate that the communication filed on February 4, 2003 had been entered, but it did indicate that claims 1-11 continued to be unpatentable. In a telephone interview with the Examiner on May 20, 2003, Appellant's representative asked whether the amendment filed on February 4, 2003 had been entered, and the Examiner's reply was that it had been entered and also would be entered upon filing of an Appeal Brief. Accordingly, at least with the filing of this Appeal Brief, the amendment filed on February 4, 2003 would be in the Application file. Appellant appealed the final rejection on April 4, 2003, following issuance of the Advisory Action.

V. SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention concerns video games and, in particular, video games that have plural operating modes where the operating modes present different experiences to the game player. Conventionally, a video game comprises a plurality of stages that are combined to form a story, and each stage has multiple scenes, each scene having a background corresponding to a single theme (page 8, line 23). A character can assume and be controlled in at least two "operational modes" when in a given scene, such as a "moving mode" and a "fighting mode." The term "operational mode" is used in the specification to describe a state within which a character can perform certain actions, but cannot perform other actions, as is clear from the description of the "moving mode" at page 9, lines 1-17 (character can move but cannot use a weapon). In an exemplary embodiment, the "operational mode" of a character can be changed by a player operating a button 152 on a controller, as described at page 9, lines 15-17.

The problem confronted and solved by the inventors concerns the manner in which background images are presented on a display during various operational modes, and in particular, the need for a CPU to read data from an external storage medium (e.g., CDR) in order to change the background image as a character leaves a scene boundary during any given operational mode. Conventionally, the background image is always changed when a character leaves a scene, thus requiring the CPU to read new data from the external storage medium. This slows the game processing, particularly during fighting or other action-packed portions of the game where the more rapid interaction between player/controller and display results in a more enjoyable experience (page 2, lines 1-24).

According to the present invention, predetermined ones of a plurality of different "operational modes" for a character will be subject to certain restrictions in order to enable more rapid processing of player input data. Such restrictions may be applied to operational modes of a character during any of the several stages of a video game that the character appears. In particular, one primary restriction is to preclude a switching of background images when a character is in a particular operational mode, such that a background image will not change

where a character moves across a scene boundary. Thus, as a result of such restriction, a single background image is used, but the player can have a more intense and enjoyable experience, due to the availability of more processing capability. That is, by precluding background changes, the CPU is dedicated to rapid processing of player commands and is not interrupted or diverted to tasks related to background processing, as explained at pages 9 and 10.

In the exemplary embodiments disclosed in the present application, two operational modes are considered for a character, a **fighting mode** and a **moving mode**. Such different operational modes for a given character may exist during a single game. The restriction on switching of backgrounds is provided for the fighting mode. A restriction on the use of a weapon is provided for the moving mode. Thus, a background image is generated on the basis of background image data stored on a CDR and downloaded into memory and the data is used when an operational mode is put into a **moving mode.** Thus, where the character enters a scene-to-scene boundary, the CDR will provide new background image data for the new scene, requiring a CDR reading time. However, when the operational mode is a **fighting mode** and the character enters a scene to scene boundary, the scene is not switched and the background remains the same, thereby avoiding the need for reading the CDR. This feature permits the game to avoid delays, caused by reading the CDR, particularly during the most intense activity of the game, the fighting scenes. This limitation on changing background during an operational mode is reflected in all of the claims.

VI. ISSUES

This appeal presents three issues:

Issue A: Are independent method claim 1 and its dependent claim 2, independent storage medium claim 4 and its dependent claim 5, independent storage medium claim 7, independent optical disk claim 8 and independent video game device with storage medium claim 9 unpatentable over Rieder (5,769,718) under 35 USC §103(a)?

Issue B: Are dependent claims 3 and 6, which depend from claims 1 and 4, respectively, and add express limitations to a fighting mode and a moving mode, unpatentable over Rieder (5,769,718) under 35 USC §103(a)?

Issue C: Are dependent claims 10 and 11, which further limit parent claims 3 and 6, respectively to a moving mode in which a character cannot fight using a weapon, unpatentable over Rieder (5,769,718) under 35 USC §103(a)?

VII. GROUPING OF CLAIMS

Claims 1, 2, 4, 5 and 7-9 stand and fall together, because they are directed to the basic feature of a video game method or a video game device that executes such method, where there are plural "operational modes" and, in at least one particular "operational mode," a restriction is placed upon changing the displayed background image and upon completion of such particular operational mode, the restriction is lifted. This restriction is applied in order to increase speed and reduce CPU processing during the particular operational mode..

Claims 3 and 6 stand and fall together, but separately from their parent claims, because they relate to a feature of a video game method or a video game device that specifically employs an operational mode that is a "moving mode" and a "fighting mode" and the fighting mode is subject to the restriction on changing backgrounds. The "moving mode" is not subject to such restriction, since higher speed and reduced CPU processing is not important. This recitation is patentably different from that of the parent claims since the claim focuses on a combat game, where characters have weapons and the fighting mode requires quick action and responsiveness that would be compromised by background changes, while the moving mode can proceed more slowly and would typically involve changes in background as a character moves during that operational mode.

Claims 10 and 11 stand and fall together, but separately from their parent claims, because they relate to a feature of a video game method or a video game device that specifically employs a "moving mode" and the character cannot fight during the moving mode. This recitation is patentably different from that of the parent claims since these claims add a further and consistent

feature to the ability to change backgrounds as a character is moved across scene boundaries in the moving mode.

VIII. ARGUMENTS

ISSUE A - Claims 1, 2, 4, 5 and 7-9 Are Patentable Over Rieder (5,769,718).

Independent claims 1, 4 and 7-9, as well as dependent claims 2 and 5 have several significant features relevant tot the patentability of the claims. First, they explicitly define the existence of plural "operational modes" for a player character. Second, they expressly state that the switching of the background images from the start to the finish of a predetermined mode is restricted. Third, they expressly state that there is switching of background images after the completion of the predetermined operational mode for the character where switching had been restricted. Finally, they expressly require a display of a player character and non-characters being kept unchanged, i.e., reflecting the continuity of a single stage. None of these four features is found in the patent to Rieder.

Rieder

The Examiner asserts that Rieder teaches a video game, having player characters, non-player characters and background images, which is operable in a plurality of modes assigned to the player characters and is able to generate images of the player character corresponding to the various modes as well as images of non-player characters with background images, as illustrated in Fig. 6. The Examiner asserts that Rieder teaches in the Summary at col. 2, line 11+ and cols. 5-8 with regard to Figs. 4-8 that the player character can have a weapon and can be in a moving state where it moves while carrying a weapon, with specific reference to Fig. 5.

The Examiner admits that the display of an image of a player character corresponding to any one operational mode, together with a non-player character, both kept unchanged while background images are controlled to display scenes adjacent to each other in a location, is NOT expressly taught in Rieder. The admission is necessarily made because the Examiner is required to assert that such feature is "inherent."

The Examiner also admits that the feature in independent claims 1, 4, 7, 8 and 9 that requires restricting the switching of the background images from the start until the completion of an operational mode, as well as the features in dependent claims 2 and 5 relating to video RAM capacity are NOT expressly taught in Rieder. The admission is necessarily made because the Examiner is required to assert that they are either "inherent" or "well known."

The Examiner references, but does not expressly cite, the Street Fighter video game as supporting "inherency" and his conclusions with regard to the teachings of Rieder. The Examiner's rejection should be reversed because:

(1) Rieder is deficient by the Examiner's own admission and by a review of its teachings,

(2) the Examiner's application of the law of inherency in order to remedy the deficiencies of Rieder is in error,

(3) the Examiner cannot rely on Street Fighter in his rejection as it is not cited, and

(4) even if considered, the Street Fighter reference does not provide the teachings missing from Rieder.

The Examiner's Admissions and Deficiencies in Rieder Require Reversal

Rieder is the only art cited and applied by the Examiner. Rieder does not teach any of the three key elements of the claimed invention. Rieder mentions a "background's image" in the abstract and at col. 7, line 46-col. 8, line 45, and describes how the image may change as the player moves. Rieder also describes at col. 5, line 40-col. 7, line 2 how the game executing unit 31 can operate with the player character's image data generating unit 32 to make the player transfer, attack, collect power-up items and open doors. Rieder also mentions that map data reading unit 35 can read map data out of the CD ROM 23 in accordance with commands, and define the map data as a plan view of a floor defining a game space.

However, none of this disclosure teaches the existence of plural "operational modes" for a player character. The Examiner admits such deficiency. Moreover, there is no discussion of a restriction on switching of the background images from the start to the finish of a character's predetermined operational mode. The Examiner admits such deficiency. Finally, there is no disclosure that there is switching of background images after the completion of the predetermined operational mode for the character where switching had been restricted. This also is admitted by the Examiner.

In the absence of these three critical limitations, the rejection must fail.

The Examiner cannot read the term "operational mode" broadly, for example, as reflecting the state of an entire game from beginning to end. Such a broad interpretation of the term "operational mode" is not warranted, as that term is restricted to a character.

Use of "Operational Mode" in the Claims

The language of the independent claims requiring a "plurality of operational modes" that are "assigned to said player character." By this language, the "operational mode" must be a feature of a player's character and there must be a plurality of such modes. Nothing of the sort is taught in Rieder. Moreover, such term is used with consistency in the dependent claims, where an operational mode is defined as including a fighting mode and a moving mode.

Meaning of "Operational Mode" in the Specification

The term "operational mode" is clearly used in the specification as being related to a character, particularly the player's own character, as disclosed at page 9, lines 1-5. There is no suggestion that the term has any other meaning. It cannot relate to other possible "modes" in the processor, memory or software in general. The "operational mode" relates to a character, and there are a plurality of such modes.

Rieder Does Not Teach Restrictions on Background Images for Given Operational Modes or Solve the Problem of Time Delay by Applying Such Restrictions

Rieder represents the state of the art in conventional martial arts video games. Rieder changes background images under a variety of conditions. Rieder does not restrict a change in background images on the basis of the conditions defined by the claimed invention, namely, on the basis of an operational mode of a character. The Examiner has not even identified in Rieder the existence of plural "operational modes" as that term is used and defined by the Appellant.

The Examiner appears to create his own definition of "operational modes" and to assert that on the basis of such definition, the claim limitation is met. Specifically, the Examiner appears to argue that in Rieder, a player will progress through various stages or levels, and that each such level or stage has a specified background, and that for a given level the background does not change. For example, the Examiner appears to asset that in the prior art martial art video games, that the background or environment is not changed until a character finishes a fight, e.g., kills a "Boss" or key enemy opponent. After such victory, the same character moves to the next stage and starts another fight in a different environment, e.g., country, historical era, building or the like. The Examiner appears to assert that this feature reads on the claim language.

Clearly, on the basis of Appellant's definitions and use in the specification and claims, a stage in a game is not an "operational mode" of a character. Such stages are independent of each other. First, they may occur at two different geographical locations or positions, for example, U.S.A. and Japan. Second, with each change of stage, the previous state of the player character is canceled and a new state is initialized at the beginning of the next stage, regardless of the state of the character in a previous stage. Third, with each change of stage, the enemy characters (non-player characters) are changed. That is, the player character fights with other characters different from the characters appearing in the previous stage, at a location different from the location in the previous stage. For example, in connection with "Street Fighter," the location in the previous stage may be in the USA and the location in the next stage may be placed in Japan. Thus, in Street Fighter, when the stage is changed from one to another, both the location and opponent

character are also changed. Throughout each stage, however, the background image can change as a player character moves and there is no restriction based on "operational modes" of the character, i.e., based on whether the character is in a moving or fighting mode.

Given the Examiner's assertion of a broader definition of operational mode, there is no need for a restriction on changing background in the manner claimed. For example, the movement or changing of the character from one to another place can be realized in the virtual world of the martial art video game by changing the stages from one to another. Even if such changing the places or stages may take a significant time, they are acceptable to a player. First, the previous level or stage is completed. Second, movement from place to place in the real world takes time. Third, during such change, the character may have a rest period that is long enough to recover its physical condition and to move to the next stage, e.g. to another country by airplane. Thus, there is adequate reason in a martial art video game for a player to accept the delay needed for processing and reading image data of a new stage from recording medium such as CD-ROM and drawing the stage on a display device.

On the other hand, according to the present invention, where the focus is on displaying an image of player characters and non-player characters in a condition where they are kept unchanged, and rapid response time is desired during an operational mode for the player character, a restriction on changing background has significant advantages.

The Examiner's Application of the Law of Inherency is Erroneous

The assertion that a feature is "inherent" requires that it must necessarily exist, and that no other alternative implementation could be possible. According to the Federal Circuit, a feature is inherent if the missing descriptive material is "necessarily present," not merely probably or possibly present, in the prior art. *In re Robertson*, 49 USPQ2d 1949, 1950-51 (Fed. Cir. 1999) (citing *Continental Can Co. USA, Inc. v. Monsanto Co.*, 20 USPQ2d 1746, 1749 (Fed. Cir. 1991)). The Manual of Patent Examining Procedure also has a similar restricted view (see **MPEP 2112** and citations to *In re Rijckaert* and *In re Oelrich*).

In Rieder, there is no inherent use of plural operational modes and there is no inherent restriction on background image changes in predetermined ones of a plurality of operational modes. The Applicant's own background teaches that there is at least one conventional way of handling background images for different operational modes - namely, change the background in all operational modes. Thus, the claimed feature, which is not disclosed expressly in Rieder, cannot be inherent, particularly as to fighting and moving modes.

The Examiner Cannot Rely on Street Fighter In The Present Appeal

The Examiner also has asserted that the feature of :"operational modes" is well known and that a restriction on switching background images during a predetermined one of such mode is well known. Applicant previously argued that the assertion that a feature is well known must be supported by documentation, according to MPEP **2144.03**. If the Examiner is to rely upon documented evidence for such feature, it must be cited in the rejection. On its face, the Examiner's rejection relies only on Rieder. As already demonstrated, Rieder is inadequate to support a rejection of the claims. The Examiner's indirect mention of Street Fighter cannot present a proper basis for rejection; the reference must be specifically and directly asserted. In the absence of such express assertion, the reference cannot be relied on.

Street Fighter Does Not Provide The Teachings Missing From Rieder

Even if the Examiner's reliance on Street Fighter in framing the rejection of the claims is viewed as necessarily citing Street Fighter as part of the rejection, as demonstrated subsequently, the Examiner's understanding of Street Fighter is in error. Moreover, Street Fighter does not teach plural operational modes for a character where, at a time that images of a player character and non-player character are kept unchanged, the changing of the background images during an entire mode is restricted.

Street Fighter

In Street Fighter, the game is operative to switch a background image from one to another in two ways. Neither one applies to the present invention, as claimed.

First Switching Way

In a first one of the switching ways in Street Fighter, when a character is close to a vertical boundary of the screen and next moves beyond the boundary, the background image is switched from one image to another image. This shows that the switching of the background image is dependent on the position of the opponent character, and is NOT dependent on any operational mode. In any event, such feature does not demonstrate a restriction on the background image. Instead, this demonstrates a freedom to change background images without restriction.

On the other hand, switching the background image from one to another in the present invention depends on an operational mode, as determined by an action of a character. The background image does not depend on a position of a character. Consequently, Applicant submits that the switching way of the background image in the present invention is completely different from the first switching way in Street Fighter. In fact, they are opposites. Moreover, because of this significant difference (character position vs. operational mode), the switching on the basis of a character position would not lead one of ordinary skill to switch by mode. Clearly, the Examiner cannot look to Street Fighter to remedy the deficiencies of Rieder.

Second Switching Way

In the second one of the switching ways in Street Fighter, when a player character wins over the opponent and moves to another stage to fight another character, the background image is switched. In this case, it is assumed that the characters are kept in one operational mode during a battle and are shifted into another operational mode by moving from a previous stage to another one. In this case, however, a background image in the previous stage is completely different from a background image in a next stage. In other words, the background images in Street Fighter are discrete and independent from each other.

On the other hand, the background images in the present invention display scenes that "are adjacent to each other in location," as expressly stated in the preamble of Claims 1 and 4, and in the body of claims 7, 8 and 9. In other words, the "adjacent scenes" that are displayed

represent portions of a single overall location (e.g., a battle ground) and are continuous to each other, as exemplified by the illustrations of Figs. 3-7 and as described at page 9 of the specification. Clearly, these "adjacent" scenes are closely related from the perspective of the user viewing the screen.

As mentioned above, in Street Fighter, background images switched between stages are obviously separate and distinct from each other, and do not represent continuous scenes. Additionally, a player of Street Fighter does not have to, nor can he/she, manipulate his/her character while the character moves from one stage to another. Accordingly, even if some waiting time would occur while background images are being switched, such a waiting time does not affect the result of the game.

In other words, an entire game cannot serve as a single operational mode. Appellant respectfully submits that a feature of a game where there are plural "operational modes", such as moving and fighting, and the background switching is restricted in only certain of the different modes, as claimed, is not contemplated by Street Fighter.

Notably, the Examiner cannot point out how Street Fighter has (1) plural operational modes and (2) restricts background during a predetermined particular mode. In the absence of a specific teachings of these limitations in written prior art documentation, this rejection should be reversed. Applicant respectfully submits that with proper interpretation and attention to all of the limitations in the claims, the it is clear that the prior art does not teach the claimed invention.

ISSUE B: Claims 3 And 6 Are Patentable Over Rieder (5,769,718).

Claims 3 and 6 are patentable for the reasons given with regard to their parent claims in the discussion of Issue A. Moreover, the additional limitations added by these claims, specifically those related to a are not found in Rieder or Street Fighter.

As already explained, in the present invention, two modes are considered, a **fighting mode** and a **moving mode**. The support for the above language in the specification may be found at pages 9 and 10 of the application, where the focus of the teaching is on a **moving mode** and **fighting mode** for a character. The application further teaches that a background image is generated on

the basis of background image data stored on a CDR and downloaded into memory. The data is used when an operational mode is put into a **moving mode**, and where the character enters a scene-to-scene boundary, the CDR must provide new background image data for the new scene, requiring a CDR reading time. However, when the operational mode is a **fighting mode** and the character enters a scene to scene boundary, the scene is not switched and the background remains the same, thereby avoiding the need for reading the CDR. This permits the game to avoid delays, caused by reading the CDR, particularly during the most intense activity of the game, the fighting scenes. This limitation on changing background during an operational mode that is a fighting mode is simply not taught in Street Fighter.

The Examiner has taken the position that the limitation of "the image of the player ... while carrying the weapon" (claims 3 and 6) is also "notoriously well known in the gaming industry," with apparent reference to features of Street Fighter. Applicant strongly disagrees with the Examiner's reliance on this comment. First, the comment does not acknowledge the limitations in the claims with respect to the switching of the background when one of the fighting and moving modes is an operational mode. Second, no prior art cited by the Examiner teaches a restriction on switching a background when an operational mode is one of a fighting mode and a moving mode.

According to claims 3 and 6, the fighting mode represents "a state wherein said player character is able to fight using said weapon", and "fighting mode is set as said particular operational mode." Consequently, with reference to the last subparagraph of claims 1 or 4, the changing of background images from the start until the completion of the fighting mode is restricted. Specifically, switching of background images is restricted when the character is able to fight using a weapon.

On the other hand, in neither of Riedel or Street Fighter is there any restriction against switching background images on the basis of whether or not the character carries a weapon, or whether or not the character can fight using the weapon. In Street Fighter, there are two types of characters, those with weapons and without weapons. The switching operation of background

images is common to both types of the characters. One of characters in Street Fighter, for example, can be equipped with a claw. Whether or not the character is currently equipped with that weapon has nothing to do with the switching of background images behind the character.

The Examiner has not, nor can he, point out how Street Fighter has (1) plural operational modes and (2) restricts background during a predetermined particular mode. In the absence of specific teachings in the prior art documentation relied upon by the Examiner, this rejection should be overcome.

ISSUE C: Claims 10 And 11 Are Patentable Over Rieder (5,769,718).

This rejection is traversed for three reasons. First, Rieder alone is inadequate to teach the claimed invention because it does not teach express claim limitations, as admitted by the Examiner. Second, the Examiner provides no documentary evidence that the missing features are well known in the art, as required by MPEP 2144.03 ("If applicant traverses such an assertion the Examiner should cite a reference in support of his or her position.") Third, the Examiner is simply wrong about what he believes (without any documentation) the game Street Fighter actually involves. Moreover, the Examiners unsupported allegations that the limitations of claims 3 and 6, and 10 and 11 are "notoriously well known in the gaming industry" is challenged. The Examiner has not identified any teaching in any art where these features are taught, and in particular, has not identified any

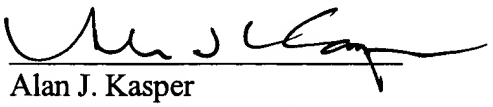
Claims 10 and 11, which provide added detail related to the feature or claims 3 and 6, respectively, further define separately patentable differences between the present invention and the features of Riedel and Street Fighter.

Applicant respectfully submits that, with proper interpretation and attention to all of the limitations in the claims, the it must be concluded that the prior art does not teach the claimed invention.

The present Brief on Appeal is being filed in triplicate.

Appellants hereby petition for any extension of time that may be required to maintain the pendency of this case, and any required fee for such extension is to be charged to Deposit Account No. 19-4880.

Respectfully submitted,



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Date: June 4, 2003

APPENDIX

CLAIMS 1-11 ON APPEAL:

1. A method of displaying, in a video game device, an image of a player character and images of non-player characters, together with one type of background image from at least two or more switchable types of background images that display scene adjacent to each other in location, comprising the steps of:

predetermining a plurality of operational modes which are assigned to said player character, and preparing an image corresponding to each operational mode;

displaying an image of the player character corresponding to any one of said plurality of operational modes together with images of said non-player characters with both the images of the player and the non-player characters kept unchanged, simultaneously with any one of said background images;

restricting the switching of said background images from the start until the completion of a predetermined particular operational mode of said plurality of operational modes; and

switching said background images from one to another in response to manipulation of an input device of the video game device after the completion of the predetermined particular operational mode.

2. The method according to claim 1, wherein the amount of information relating to each of said background images is determined on the basis of the video RAM capacity of said video game device.

3. The method according to claim 1, wherein the image of said player character is an image displaying said player character in a state where it is carrying a weapon;

said plurality of operational modes include a fighting mode representing a state wherein said player character is able to fight using said weapon, and a moving mode representing a state

wherein said character moves whilst carrying said weapon; and

said fighting mode is set as said particular operational mode.

4. A computer-readable storage medium storing an image display program for displaying an image of a player character and images of non-player characters, together with one type of background image from at least two or more switchable types of background image that display scenes adjacent to each other in location, in a video game device, comprising:

a region storing images corresponding respectively to a plurality of predetermined operational modes which can be adopted by said player character; and

a region storing an image display program for causing a video game device to implement processing for displaying an image of a player character corresponding to any one of said plurality of operational modes together with images of non-player characters with both the images of the player and the non-player characters kept unchanged, simultaneously with any one of said background images, processing for restricting the switching of said background images from the start until the completion of a predetermined particular operational mode of said plurality of operational modes, and processing for switching said background images from one to another in response to manipulation of an input device of the video game device after the completion of the predetermined particular operational mode.

5. The storage medium according to claim 4, wherein the amount of information relating to each of said background images is determined on the basis of the video RAM capacity of said video game device.

6. The storage medium according to claim 4, wherein the image of said player character is an image displaying said player character in a state where it is carrying a weapon;

said plurality of operational modes include a fighting mode representing a state wherein said player character is able to fight using said weapon, and a moving mode representing a state wherein said character moves whilst carrying said weapon; and

said fighting mode is set as said particular operational mode.

7. A storage medium storing a game program incorporating an image display program, the image display program comprising the steps of :

predetermining a plurality of operational modes which are assigned to a player character, and preparing an image corresponding to each operational mode;

displaying an image of the player character corresponding to any one of said plurality of operational modes together with images of non-player characters with both the images of the player and the non-player characters kept unchanged, simultaneously with any one of background images that display scenes adjacent to each other in location;

restricting changing of said background images from the start until the completion of a predetermined particular operational mode of said plurality of operational modes; and

switching said background images from one to another in response to manipulation of an input device of the video game device after the completion of the predetermined particular operational mode.

8. An optical disk storing a game program incorporating an image display program, the image display program comprising the steps of :

predetermining a plurality of operational modes which are assigned to a player character, and preparing an image corresponding to each operational mode;

displaying an image of the player character corresponding to any one of said plurality of operational modes together with images of non-player characters with both the images of the player and the non-player characters kept unchanged, simultaneously with any one of background images that display scenes adjacent to each other in location;

restricting changing of said background images from the start until the completion of a predetermined particular operational mode of said plurality of operational modes; and

switching said background images from one to another in response to manipulation of an input device of the video game device after the completion of the predetermined particular operational mode.

9. A video game device internally comprising the storage medium storing a game program incorporating an image display program, the image display program comprising the steps of:

predetermining a plurality of operational modes which are assigned to a player character, and preparing an image corresponding to each operational mode;

displaying an image of a player character corresponding to any one of said plurality of operational modes together with images of non-player characters with both the images of the player and the non-player characters kept unchanged, simultaneously with any one of background images that display scenes adjacent to each other in location;

restricting changing of said background images from the start until the completion of a predetermined particular operational mode of said plurality of operational modes; and

switching said background images from one to another in response to manipulation of an input device of the video game device after the completion of the predetermined particular operational mode.

10. The method according to claim 3 wherein said character is unable to fight using said weapon in the moving mode.

11. The storage medium according to claim 6 wherein said character is unable to fight using said weapon in the moving mode.